

CHAPTER III

THE VALLEY OF LILIES

" Virgo sacra, jam summo doctore docente imo etiam compellente, addiacebat quotldie iplius, et la lectulo florido frul Sponsi caelestis amplexibus et ad convallem liliorum icendere, ut foecundlor redderetur; nee altemm pro altero dimittere aut diminuere."—• imondo da Capua, *Legenda*, § 130.

IT was probably in 1366 that Catherine, the mystery
of her
Iritual espousals being fulfilled, began to go forth
from her cell,
join in the life of the family, to labour for the
conversion of
uls. The voice of the celestial Bridegroom
sounded in her
rs : *Open to me, my sister, my beloved, my
dove;* which Fra
limondo interprets : " Open for me the gates of
souls that I
ay enter them. Open the path by which My
sheep may pass
and out, and find pasture. Open for My honour
thy treasury
divine grace and knowledge, and pour it forth upon
the faith-
1." The gifts that she had received in the cell
were now to
5 made manifest to the
world.

Once more, and this time in the face of vigorous
opposition om her family, Catherine devoted herself
to all the humblest enial labours of the house. With
her father's leave, she had 11 liberty to give as
much as she thought fit of his substance to e poor.
She tended the sick, in their houses and in
the)spitals, day and night, and with the greatest
zeal nursed those Bicted by the most loathsome
diseases. From a poor woman imed Cecca, dying of
leprosy and deserted by all, who reviled id taunted
her while she gave herself up to relieving the
horror id loneliness of her last days, she took the
dreadful malady, hich spread over her hands; but,
when the woman at length ed and Catherine had
prepared the body for burial, she was iraculously
healed. One of her own sisters in religion, Suora
almerina, had been among her chief detractors,
and persecuted a: still with her hatred when on her
death-bed; converted at st by her prayers,
Palmerina died in peace, and Catherine beheld